



**THIS MONTH** JANUARY 2016



## Smashed and Stranded

**SGT. 1ST CLASS RUPPERT BAIRD**  
Company A, 2nd Helicopter Battalion, 151st Aviation (Security and Support)  
McEntire Joint National Guard Base  
Columbia, South Carolina

It was just before New Year's and I was leaving what was then called Fort Lewis, Washington, to move my family back to South Carolina. I was coming off active duty and had rented a twin-axle trailer and installed a hitch on my minivan. This was a do-it-yourself move and we'd loaded all our worldly possessions into the trailer. Our 4-year-old daughter was in her car seat, strapped to the front passenger seat, and our 2-year-old son was in his car seat, strapped to the rear bench seat next to my wife. The

family cat was also with us as we left a few minutes before midnight.

I was anxious as we pulled out of Tacoma and headed east toward Snoqualmie Pass and the Cascade Mountains. As we made our way through the pass, we encountered gusting winds that rocked the van and trailer. I slowed down to ensure I kept full control. After we got through the pass, the winds died down. We merged onto Interstate 82 and I settled in for a night of driving.

One of the strange anomalies of the interstate system is a loop on

I-82 in southeastern Washington. I planned to bypass this loop by going through Prosser on State Highway 221 and reentering I-82 just north of Umatilla, Oregon. Mind you, this was before cellphones or vehicle global positioning systems were so easily accessible, so the only thing I had was a map. It seemed logical to me that this would be a safe, well-traveled route.

As we pulled through Prosser, I recognized the dangers posed by the ice, snow and wind and drove at or below the speed limit. I then began

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climbing into Horse Heaven Hills. As I drove, I saw a warning sign for a 90-degree right turn and a 25-mph speed limit. I slowed, feeling sure I would be fine at 20 mph; however, the black ice didn't agree.

As I eased around the turn, I felt the trailer rock. Thinking I had encountered winds again, I decelerated. That was a mistake. Even though the van made the corner, the trailer began sliding on the ice. Before I knew what happened, the van and trailer jackknifed and I was out of control. I tried steering into the direction of the skid, but to no avail. All I could do was hold on as my van was pushed diagonally across the road and into the oncoming lane. Fortunately, there were no other drivers on the road.

I watched helplessly as the van's passenger door struck a road sign, shattering glass all over my daughter and into the van. My wife had been sleeping in the van's floor and woke up just in time to feel the wheels come off the pavement as we encountered soft dirt on the roadside. We felt the van tilt and roll over at least twice before landing on its right side.

My daughter and son were screaming. I reached down from my now-elevated seat, brushed the glass shards off my daughter and found her unhurt. I then looked to the rear to check on my wife and son. He was firmly strapped into his car seat while my wife was sitting cross-legged on the interior right side of the van. Although stunned, she was amazingly calm. I repeatedly asked her if she and our son were all right. Incredibly, they were.

I looked forward and was surprised the van's engine, headlights, radio and heater were still functioning perfectly. I took a breath, shut off the van and smelled for gasoline. Fortunately, I didn't smell any fumes. Nevertheless, I decided we needed to exit the van immediately. I removed my seat belt, carefully pushed open the driver-side door, pulled myself out of the van and had my wife

**"As I eased around the turn, I felt the trailer rock. Thinking I had encountered winds again, I decelerated. That was a mistake."**

hand our children up to me. I then helped my wife out of the van. A carload of teenagers soon rolled up to the accident scene. They helped me move my wife and kids off the side of the van and placed them inside their warm car while I assessed the situation.

The rear hatch and the left-rear portion of the van's body and roof were caved in. The trailer had stayed connected to the hitch and rolled over with us as we overturned. The trailer doors had popped open, scattering many of our belongings, and our cat was gone. I returned over the next

few days, but I never found him.

The van and the trailer were totaled, but the people of Prosser were incredible and took excellent care of us during our six-day stay. We ended up driving home in the largest rental truck U-Haul had — the only one that fit a family of four. We spent all of our travel money and maxed out our credit card. Thankfully, the only injury was a bruise to my wife's shoulder. The rest of our trip home was uneventful.

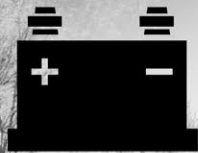
I've always been impatient to get on the road. On this journey, I let that get in the way of proper trip planning and risk assessment. I'd rented a trailer that was too large for my minivan. And, while I was aware of the black ice danger on the roads, I assumed my two years of winter driving had adequately prepared me for it. Unfortunately, an unfamiliar road, an extra-heavy load and an effort to save money proved to be my downfall.

Clearly, I should have hired a professional moving company. Also, I should have waited until the morning to leave, when much of the ice would have been melted. I also should have ensured everyone in the van remained properly buckled.

The good thing about lessons learned is that you get the opportunity to avoid repeating your mistakes. Back then, online tools like U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's Travel Risk Planning System didn't exist. Now that they do, I — as a full-time National Guardsman — use them. It sure beats being smashed and stranded on the road.■



# HERE IT COMES



***Don't wait for the storm to come. Now is the time to get your vehicle ready.***

- Emergency kit
- Blanket
- Flashlight
- Heat source



# READY ...OR NOT?

***Ready ... or Not*** is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their “readiness” for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we're not. Navigating life's challenges is all about decision-making.

So are ***YOU*** ready ... or not?



<https://safety.army.mil>





## A Torch to Carry

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

**"T**wo to fly, systems, you good in the back?" As a junior aviator, statements

like this were commonplace in my cockpit, but never resulted in an incident or accident.

As a unit trainer, I taught this technique without reprisal or correction from my seniors. As a student at the instructor pilot course, however, I said it for the last time. Here's what happened.

It was my first flight as an IP course student with about five aviation years under my belt. The standardization instructor pilot trainer heard me use the statement, along with other technique-laden callouts and abbreviations, as I proceeded to start the Black Hawk with speed and proud precision. He'd had enough.

After a brief professional scolding, I was instructed to shut down the aircraft. I then received another barrage of instruction about how I started the aircraft. I thought to myself, "What is he trying to sell me and why is it more important than flying?" After we got back to the table, I was introduced to a philosophy that fundamentally changed the way I thought about crew coordination. It helped set the foundation for professional discipline in my cockpit.

The SP read Army Regulation 95-1, paragraph 2-5b, which states:



"Operator and crewmember checklists will be used for preflight through before-leaving aircraft checks. While airborne, when time does not permit use of the checklist or when its use would cause a safety hazard, required checks may be accomplished from memory." He then pointed out in Training Circular 3-04.33, Task 1024: "The crewmember reading the checklist will read

was on the ground and I wasn't in immediate danger I should call out from the checklist. Although the discussion was a technical one, the major concern he addressed was not that a before-takeoff check needed to be read and said correctly to fly safely. It pointed to discipline. As fundamental as other Army competencies, the correct use of operator checklists promotes standardization. It

**"Sometimes, while we're under instruction or evaluation, we magically become different aviators."**

the complete checklist item." In the checklist, the correct before-takeoff check reads: "1. ENG POWER CONT levers – FLY. 2. Systems – Check. 3. Avionics – As required. 4. Crew, passengers, and mission equipment – Secure. 5. CMWS Crew Safety pin – Remove as required. 6. Auxiliary fuel management panel – Set as required."

He taught me that because time was not an issue, the aircraft

demonstrates intrinsic and extrinsic discipline and lays a foundation for instructor credibility that enhances crew coordination.

Sometimes, while we're under instruction or evaluation, we magically become different aviators. The nervousness, desire to excel, self-doubt and need to complete the task sometimes drives us to demonstrate more professional competence with



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better crew coordination. However, aviators conduct themselves the way they deem appropriate when unsupervised by an IP. Teaching this philosophy is ineffective unless crewmembers buy into it and change enduring negative behaviors. Trainers must teach and enforce fundamental discipline, and commanders must promote effective, rules-compliant programs.

This philosophy is a torch to carry. Instructors may find an amount of resistance for being too picky, too standardized or too "by the book." Because learning is a change in behavior as a result of experience, it is a challenge to teach others rooted in primacy.

**"Developing better ways to sell the philosophy through measured persistence, leadership, social awareness and competence has been rewarding."**

Many years have passed since I attended the IP course and I've grown as a trainer while holding positions of increasing influence. Developing better ways to sell the philosophy through measured persistence, leadership, social awareness and competence has been rewarding. I've observed that eventually a majority of personnel

under my direction see beyond checklist use instruction, buy in and become more disciplined crewmembers overall.

That SP trainer years ago instilled in me qualities I still bring to trainees to this day. I internalized the philosophy, bought in, and find myself teaching it on nearly every flight since then. ■

**ARE YOU READY?**

**ARAP**

ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

*ARAP is a Web-based initiative that provides battalion-level commanders with data on their formation's readiness posture.*

**<https://safety.army.mil>**



# HERE IT COMES

*Are you ready to crank?*



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## A Lesson I'll Never Forget

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 THOMAS FRENCH  
Detachment 26, Operational Support Airlift Command  
Virginia Army National Guard  
Sandston, Virginia

I believe you must learn lessons from certain events in your life. Life-changing situations can become blessings when viewed through the right lenses.

When I was about 4 or 5 years old, my grandfather showed me his gun collection. He worked on the railroad and gun collecting was his hobby since returning home from World War II. His collection was his prized possession. Imagine my excitement when he told me I could have a gun of my very own and gave me a .22-caliber revolver that resembled a six shooter from the Old West.

My grandfather explained how to clean and maintain the gun, as well as how to safely handle it. He warned me it was important to not pull the trigger when there were no bullets in the pistol because it could break the firing pin. My grandfather was a big man who always demanded respect but also gave me a lot of love. I looked up to him and always wanted to please him, so I obeyed his warning.

Fast forward about a decade to when I was 14 years old. It was a sunny day and I was preparing to go groundhog hunting on the farm. Hunting was a regular activity on the weekends. My friends and I would hunt until we either ran out of bullets or got hungry. Before hunting, I would always clean and oil my rifle and pistol to make sure they didn't get rusty or malfunction. As I was about to clean my pistol, I heard one of my best friends, Kevin, walking up to my back porch.

In what can only be explained as a juvenile lack of judgment, I



suddenly thought about scaring Kevin. I decided to go out onto the deck and catch him by surprise. I walked out just as Kevin was stepping onto the porch and, without explanation, pointed my pistol at him. Of course, I was just kidding and only wanted to scare him.

I still remember seeing the stunned expression on his face as he saw the pistol pointed at him. As he looked at me, I thought, "Maybe I'll pull the trigger just to show him the gun is unloaded." I wanted to scare him, but I also wanted him to know I wouldn't place him in danger. At that point, for some unknown reason, I thought about what my grandfather had told me about pulling the trigger of my pistol on an empty chamber and breaking the firing pin. In that split second, I lowered the pistol and released the trigger without pulling it.

We walked back into my house and I asked Kevin if I had scared him. He said I caught him by surprise, but he knew I was just kidding. We laughed and put on our boots and

jackets and got ready to go hunting.

I grabbed my rifle, pistol and a box of .22-caliber bullets. To this day I don't remember what Kevin saw on my face when I opened the cylinder and saw the pistol had been loaded all along. In that instant, my whole life flashed before my eyes. I thought about my friendship with Kevin and my own dreams for the future. I thought of Kevin lying on the ground dead because of my stupidity. How would I explain the accident to our parents? I even thought about going to prison for taking another person's life due to my negligence. It's a lesson I'll never forget.

I sometimes think back to that day and what it was that kept me from pulling the trigger. I thank my grandfather for making the type of impression that would cause a split-second memory that prevented a tragedy. I also think of the other impressions he made on me that have guided my life in a positive way. In this case, I know it saved a life. ■





## The Intersection of Complacency and Surprise

1ST ARMORED DIVISION  
Fort Bliss, Texas

**Author's note: The story you are about to read was written by a Soldier-rider and is true. The events are retold to give insights into the many hazards riders face when they are on the road. The lessons will help us all become more experienced motorcycle riders.**

**W**hile riding up Dyer Street in El Paso, Texas, Spc. Red (his friends call him Big Red) was thinking about intersections and the dangers they present to him and his Honda CBR600RR. Big Red was watching a beat-up-looking pickup in the oncoming left-turn lane about half block ahead. He was concentrating on the top of the truck's front-left tire because he knew the top of a tire moves at twice the speed as the vehicle. Therefore, it was the best initial indication that the truck is about to pull in front of him.

Suddenly, Big Red caught movement in his peripheral vision when a late-model sedan pulled out of a shopping center parking lot and right into his path of travel. He began emergency braking and aimed for the back of the sedan in an effort to pass behind it. About the same time, the driver of the sedan realized he had pulled out in front of Big Red and slammed on the brakes. With nowhere left to go and not enough room to stop, Big



Red hit the back of the sedan with his front tire. Thanks to his practice and skill at braking, the impact occurred at less than 5 mph and Big Red managed to stay on his bike.

Big Red did a great job of using tactics and strategies to survive on the street. He regularly practiced avoidance maneuvers and emergency braking and identified intersections as the biggest threat a motorcyclist faces. An impressive 28 percent of car vs. motorcycle collisions in the Hurt Report occurred with a motorist making a left turn in front of a motorcyclist. But crashes occurring between intersections more often resulted in fatalities. Only 13 percent of crashes happened at alleys and driveways, but they accounted for 17 percent of all motorcycle fatalities.

Why would crashes away from intersections result in fatalities? It's likely the motorcyclists weren't prepared for mid-block crashes and speeds are higher. Likewise,

we tend to get complacent around alleys and driveways. This is exactly what happened to Big Red.

There are always multiple threats facing a motorcyclist. We must be searching for the threats and their indicators, evaluating their potential, as well as our mitigation measures and escape options and executing these measures and options. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation has an acronym for this strategy — SEE, which stands for Search, Evaluate and Execute.

If Big Red had not become fixated on the far threat and continued his SEE strategy, he probably would have noticed the near threat of the sedan preparing to exit the shopping center. Then he could have employed the tactics of lane positioning, adjusted his speed and/or sounded his horn and flashed his lights to avoid the situation developing. Thankfully, Big Red learned a valuable lesson and it did not cost him a thing. ■



# **RIDE FOR YOUR LIFE**

*The Motorcycle Mentorship Program establishes voluntary installation-level motorcycle associations where less experienced riders and seasoned riders can create a supportive environment of responsible motorcycle riding and enjoyment. This can create positive conduct and behavior and serve as a force multiplier that supports a commander's motorcycle accident prevention program.*



**MMP**  
MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

*Check out the USACRC MMP website for some examples of active mentoring programs.*

**<https://safety.army.mil>**







## Pedestrian Crossing

GEORGE C. ARZENTE III  
Installation Safety Office  
Fort Campbell, Kentucky

I was on temporary duty at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, in December 2009 when I had an experience that reinforced the importance of pedestrian safety. I had just refueled my government vehicle on base and headed out the gate. Within five minutes, I got caught in bumper-to-bumper traffic. I remember thinking, "I'll bet someone had a fender-bender ahead and now I'm stuck in this traffic." The longer traffic continued to move at a snail's pace, the more annoyed I became. I thought, "It was probably someone texting or talking on a cellphone. Someone wasn't paying attention to what they were doing."

After about 30 minutes, the line of traffic snaked through a mall parking lot. I was stopped at a red light when I noticed a man sitting on the ground to my right. He had his back against the front tire of a police car and was holding his head in his hands. I was puzzled for a moment until I looked ahead and saw an abandoned car stopped in the left lane of traffic. Beneath it, a white sheet covered someone's body. It struck me that the body under the sheet was awfully small for an adult. Then it hit me — it was a child!

With 23 years working as a safety professional, I immediately felt foolish I hadn't considered this could be a fatal accident. The next evening, when I arrived back home in Tennessee, I went on the Internet and discovered the little body under that sheet was that of a 6-year-old girl. The report said the little girl, her 5-year-old brother and her mother were walking home after Christmas shopping and had to cross a six-lane major thoroughfare.



The mother hadn't crossed this intersection before and didn't know she needed to push the crosswalk button for more time to cross safely. Once the traffic light had turned red and traffic stopped in all six lanes, she and her children began crossing the intersection. She was pushing her son

traffic violations. Those included multiple tickets for speeding, running stop signs and driving with an expired license or registration.

The driver's statement on the crash was never published, so I don't know his explanation of what happened. However, the fact remains that he

**"With 23 years working as a safety professional, I immediately felt foolish I hadn't considered this could be a fatal accident."**

in a stroller and holding her daughter's hand. They'd only passed the second lane of traffic when the light turned green. The mother said she heard a car rev its engine and, seconds later, her little girl was lying dead on the street. The mother suffered broken ribs and a broken leg. Only her son escaped injury. A background check of the driver revealed a history of

was responsible to operate his vehicle in a safe and alert manner. Even though he had the green light, he was responsible to ensure the crosswalk was clear in front of him. But he didn't. As a result, a little girl lost her life in a terrible pedestrian accident.

The Army is not immune to these types of accidents. According to U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center





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statistics, from fiscal years 2010-14, 32 Soldiers died in off-duty pedestrian accidents. Three-quarters of these accidents occurred at night, and alcohol impairment was confirmed in 31 percent of the incidents and suspected in several others. More than half of the Soldiers were struck by a vehicle while crossing the street or walking too close to the roadway. Three were hit from behind while exercising. Seven of the Soldiers were killed near a fender-bender or a disabled vehicle, and three were hit by trains while walking or laying on the tracks.

Nothing can be done for these Soldiers. However, you don't have to join them in the accident reports. Here are some safety tips for you when you're traveling on foot:

- Always walk on the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk and you must walk in the roadway, always walk facing traffic.
- Dress to be seen. Wearing bright or light-colored clothing helps drivers see you. Reflective clothing is the best, but never assume drivers can or have seen you.
- Cross streets only at marked crosswalks or intersections.
- If crossing a multilane roadway, pedestrians should visually clear each lane as they proceed.
- If a car is parked where you are trying to cross, look for other drivers who may be pulling out and not see you because they are looking for traffic.
- Remember, telephone poles, utility boxes and parked vehicles block an oncoming driver's ability to see you.
- Look LEFT – RIGHT – LEFT in countries like the United States, where motorists drive on the right side of the street. In Japan or other nations where drivers use the left side of the road, look RIGHT – LEFT – RIGHT prior to entering the street.
- Give drivers ample time to stop before you enter the crosswalk.
- Crossing at locations with traffic signals helps motorists see you.
- Wearing headphones while walking, skating, jogging, bicycling or riding a motorcycle on post is prohibited. If you choose to wear headphones off post, always remove them while crossing the street so you can hear approaching traffic.
- Always hold a child by the hand while crossing a street. Remember, walk, don't run.
- If the intersection has a pedestrian walk button, press it and cross when you are cleared to go, keeping in mind that all crosswalks do not allow the same amount of time to cross. ■



Family strong!

OLASON

My Cousin  
My Hero

Family engagement kit

<https://safety.army.mil>

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay SAFE.





## External Distraction

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 JON K. THILGES  
Installation Safety Officer, Aviation  
Fort Irwin, California

It was to be an exciting night in northern Iraq. The mission was a little different from the standard ring route to the north or south of Forward Operating Base Speicher, and I was eager to get started.

We had been briefed for the mission, and after an uneventful preflight, we went as a crew to grab a quick dinner before launching. This would be my first real external load mission with a Chinook. I was a relatively new pilot with only about 300 hours of flight time and wanted everything to go well. I was scheduled to fly with an instructor pilot and our overall crew mix was extremely experienced. I had every faith in the crew I was flying with, and, after calling tower to reposition



we immediately turned the aircraft 180 degrees to face the south and put ourselves into the wind.

Positioned between our Chalk 2 aircraft and the active runway, we proceeded to climb slightly, looking for a torque

this particular night, however, we had no internal load since we were going to lift an 8,000-pound external load and we were pulling just below 60 percent.

I called, "Clear to move No. 1 toward ground?" as I had before, night after night, but the PC stopped me and said he was just going to pull in a little power to stay above 60 percent and we could "PAT" both engines at the same time. I brought my hand back down and he started his ascent and instructed the crew members to PAT 1 and 2. I was scanning the gauges and noticed we were in about a 300-foot-per-minute rate of ascent. I said nothing and continued scanning the rest of the gauges.

When the crewmen announced the PATs were complete, I looked down at our radar altimeter and realized we were about 800 feet above ground level. I mentioned

**"The ground was approaching quickly and the PC was already putting in a thrust input, but nothing seemed to be arresting our descent. We were settling in our rotor wash."**

for hover power checks, we transitioned over to Echo taxiway.

Upon pickup, we went through a series of flight control checks and an automatic flight control systems check, which we completed before reaching Echo taxiway. Once there,

range between 60-70 percent to complete our power assurance test. On a typical internal cargo night, this would be easy to obtain with both engines at 100 percent, due to our weight. On





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it to the PC, who then acknowledged our altitude and stated he was bringing it back down. We still had a slight climb, but I didn't think much of it and let my attention wander around. I had been doing this nearly every night and since I was flying with an IP. I didn't see any need to be attentive all night long. This was the simple part of the mission, right?

After looking around outside, I brought my attention back into the aircraft and saw our VSI needle pointing at a 1,000-foot rate of decent. I immediately said, "Watch your descent, watch your descent!" The ground was approaching quickly and the PC was already putting in a thrust input, but nothing seemed to be arresting our descent. We were settling in our rotor wash.

In a tandem rotor helicopter, nosing it over to fly out of it would only increase the problem due to differential collective input. Our best option would have been to slide left, but we had Chalk 2 next to us. Our other option would be to slide right, but we didn't have far to maneuver before crossing over the active, and by then there was another flight cleared for the runway. The PC opted to slide forward and right and was able to get out of the dirty air and arrest our descent at 10 feet AGL. The PC repositioned the aircraft back over Echo taxiway, and after Chalk 2 was finished with their hover power checks, we launched on our mission.

The rest of the night went smoothly, and I enjoyed my first external load mission. But I learned an important lesson that night. We, as pilots and crewmen, are not above making mistakes, and my mindset nearly contributed to an accident. I was so confident in my PC that I failed him as a competent pilot and allowed my attention to wander by thinking, "He's got this."

My job in the other seat is not to ride along, but to assist the pilot on controls in all phases of flight. Just because he is an IP does not mean he does not need my input or assistance to complete the mission. Despite the hour levels of any pilot or crewmen, we are all held to the same standards and obligated to each other to help ensure success and safety. ■

## ARE YOU READY?

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ARMY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

**Wouldn't you like to know if your unit is about to experience a mishap?**

**Wouldn't you like to prevent the loss of personnel and equipment?**

**Don't you want to protect your combat power?**

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## Staying in the Fight RICK MCBRIDE

**C**ombatives training is an important part of being a prepared Soldier. It provides the skills to help you protect yourself, as well as your comrades, in combat. Unfortunately, this training can sometimes take Soldiers out of the fight if they don't take the proper precautions.

Like any other Soldier in the Army, I received instruction in combatives during Basic Combat Training. But this was mainly just an introduction. As a high school and Division II college wrestler, I knew about this topic, which meant the instruction at BCT seemed a little slow to me because it was geared toward Soldiers who may have less experience in this area.

My first real introduction into modern Army combatives



within the USDB had to receive a four-week preservice training before they could enter the facility. The curriculum provided a wide variety of information, which included prison weapons, gang tattoos, inmate interaction and two days of hand-to-hand combat training.

good and I was performing quite well against my fellow classmates; therefore, the instructors chose to use me for demonstrations. Because of my enthusiasm and confidence, I agreed to participate. The class leaders instructed me to tap out if I felt like I was in too much pain or if I was going to lose consciousness. During the exercise, however, my stubbornness kicked in. I believed I was tough enough to take anything they tried on me.

The instructor demonstrated chokes from the mount position, starting with a cross-collar choke. The instructor grabbed my lapels with opposite hands, and tightly drew his hands together. This cuts off the blood circulation to the brain, causing an individual to lose consciousness. Within a few seconds, I began to feel dizzy. The next thing I remember was waking up with my two

**“During the exercise, however, my stubbornness kicked in. I believed I was tough enough to take anything they tried on me.”**

occurred at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which was my first duty station. No, I was not a resident of this fine penitentiary; however, I was required to conduct monthly inspections of the United States Disciplinary Barracks. Anyone conducting business regularly

Everything was going well with the self-defense/hand-to-hand combat training. The instructors provided us with useful background information, as well as their standard safety briefing. The pace of the instruction was



instructors standing over me. The rest of my classmates were stunned, and I noticed the shocked looks on their faces. The instructors thought this incident provided a great demonstration of the effectiveness of the choke. I was not seriously injured, but it did scare the hell out of me.

What happened to me is not uncommon. In fact, there have been dozens of reported Army combatives training-related injuries over the past decade. Accidents and/or injuries are categorized according to severity. Class A is the most serious type, resulting in death or total permanent disability. Class B accidents result in a permanent partial disability. Class C accidents include any injury that requires time taken away from work and does not fall within Class A or B.

The majority of the combatives training-related accidents are classified as Class C. Although these injuries are less serious, they still take Soldiers out of the fight for which they are being prepared. Most of these injuries involve overextended joints in the knees, shoulders and elbows, as well as muscle strains and blows to the head or face. Many of these injuries are preventable by using the proper precautions. The following tips are meant for you, the Soldier, to use to avoid injury.

### Follow instructions

The instructor's role is to provide information Soldiers can use in a combative situation

## Watch Your Mouth

Losing a tooth doesn't make you look tougher or cooler. Even worse, tooth loss or other mouth injuries can be painful, expensive to fix, result in lost time from work or training, and even cause permanent facial disfigurement. Fortunately, there's something you can do to protect your smile.

Mouthguards have been studied in different military and sports settings and are proven to substantially reduce the risk of these injuries. For that reason, Army Regulation 600-63, Army Health Promotion Program, requires personnel to use mouthguards for military training activities that have been shown to have a high risk of mouth or facial injuries. These activities include obstacle and confidence courses, one-on-one combatives training, rifle and bayonet training, and pugil stick training.

In addition to these military-specific activities, several sports have been shown to have a high potential to result in injuries to the face or mouth. The American Dental Association and International Academy of Sports Dentistry have identified 29 sports and exercise activities in which they highly recommend mouthguards be worn. Many of these activities are popular with service members, including football, basketball, martial arts, wrestling, soccer, skiing, extreme sports, volleyball, racquetball, softball, skateboarding, lacrosse, rugby and equestrian events.

While all mouthguards offer some protection, some offer more than others. Other factors, such as comfort and cost and how frequently you will need to wear it, should also be considered when deciding which to use. The three types of mouthguards commonly used in sports and recreational activities include:

- **Custom-made.** These mouthguards are made from an impression of the individual's mouth, which is taken by a dentist. Constructed of high-quality materials, they offer the best level of protection. They stay in place and provide the highest level of comfort and fit. Custom-made mouthguards are also the most expensive and usually must be obtained from a dentist.

- **Boil and bite.** These mouthguards are softened in hot water and then inserted into the wearer's mouth to mold to their bite. While not as good as custom-made, boil-and-bite mouthguards provide more protection than stock ready-to-wear types. They may lose thickness and cushioning throughout use, inhibit speaking and have trouble staying in place. They're inexpensive and widely available at sporting goods stores.

- **Stock (ready to wear).** This type of mouthguard is used as purchased and must be held in place by clenching the teeth. They offer the least protection and require the mouth to be closed to use. Stock mouthguards may inhibit breathing or speaking when worn. Like boil and bite, they're inexpensive and commonly found in sporting goods stores. Sizes are limited, however, usually ranging from small to large.

Use the information above to help decide which mouthguard is right for you. Once you've made a selection, routinely clean and inspect your mouthguard and replace it when necessary. For more information, contact the Army Public Health Center's Injury Prevention Program at [usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.injuryprevention@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.injuryprevention@mail.mil).





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without injuries occurring during the training. Do not ignore the direction provided during drills. Ignoring instructions could lead to Soldier injuries.

## Ask questions

If you are unsure about the proper technique to use on your partner, ask questions before participating in drills. Taking time to ensure you understand the correct way to perform a skill will keep you and your partner safe. Beginning a drill feeling uncomfortable is an excellent way to become another statistic. When it comes to safety, there really is no such thing as a stupid question.

## Strength training and stretching

Soldiers are required to conduct physical training every day in the Army. Many experts say core strength training is the key to preventing injuries in sports such as wrestling, grappling and mixed martial arts. Core strength training includes the gluteus maximus, abdominal muscles and back and chest muscles. Staying limber is also helpful in avoiding injury. Stretching is an important start before any type of PT, including combatives and hand-to-hand combat. Exercising without stretching and warming up properly can lead to injuries, including, but not limited to, pulled and strained muscles, knee and joint injuries and additional soreness following the activity.

## Know your limits

Overconfidence is a major risk factor for many Soldiers. Knowing your limits and not being afraid to let your partner know when to ease up is important to avoid serious injury. Avoid taking additional risks when participating in combatives training. While you may enjoy combatives training, it's important to remember that pushing your

body further than it is able to tolerate can lead to injury, which means less actual participation.

## Be a good partner

Understand that you are not there to injure yourself or your partner. Proper combatives training requires you to train hard; however, listening to and understanding your partner is the key to preventing injury. When pairing with a partner, choose someone who is similar in size and ability level. Pay close attention to warning signs that your partner may be under too much physical stress. This may include verbal or nonverbal communication such as tapping or vocalizing their discomfort. If your buddy taps out or says "stop," discontinue what you are doing immediately. Combatives training is not the time to deal with negative issues you may have with another Soldier. It is completely unacceptable to address personal vendettas during this type of training. The goal is to prepare your fellow Soldiers for possible hand-to-hand combat situations in a realistic, yet controlled, setting.

## Conclusion

Combatives training provides skills to help you to protect yourself and your comrades in combat. Ignoring the tips provided increases your risk of harming yourself or others. Don't take yourself or a buddy out of the fight. ■

## If it happens ...





**Get the tools before  
the road gets rough.**



## **Driver's Training Toolbox**

<https://safety.army.mil>







## All the Rage

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 KEITH DELAUNE



I am a pretty calm guy. I find that getting worked up about things only tends to make matters worse. That's not to say I don't enjoy getting other people riled up, particularly those who are being jerks. One group of folks I especially liked messing with was road rage drivers. I eventually learned, however, that could be dangerous.

My buddy and I were on our way home from vacation, driving on a two-lane highway with a

passing a motorist traveling in the right-hand lane when a sports car, driven by a man we will call Mr. Sports, approached us from behind and started riding our bumper and swerving left and right. I do not like being tailgated, but I'm not one of those drivers who brake-checks people. I usually just calmly let off the accelerator and slow down until the tailgater backs off.

When I slowed down to get Mr. Sports off my rear, the car in the

**"He had his window down and was yelling at us. We continued to laugh at him, which I think further escalated his road rage."**

speed limit of 65 mph. We were traveling about 5 to 10 mph above the speed limit and occasionally passing cars. As luck would have it, traffic on the highway was light, so we were making great time.

We were in the process of

right lane I'd been passing pulled ahead. Mr. Sports did not like this at all and, instead of giving me space so I could continue my drive in peace, swerved into the right lane, honked his horn and flipped me off. My buddy and I laughed.

We decided Mr. Sports was a jerk and it was time to mess with him.

We began playing what I would describe as the speed-up, slow-down game. The game involved us pacing the other car that was in the right lane and then slowly speeding up until Mr. Sports moved back into the fast lane. Then we'd slow down again so the vehicle in the right lane passed us and Mr. Sports changed lanes. The object was to see how many times we could make Mr. Sports switch lanes.

After about the sixth lane change, Mr. Sports looked like he was at his breaking point. I decided he'd had enough and learned his lesson, so I sped up to finally pass the car in the right-hand lane. While waiting to get a safe distance ahead of that car, Mr. Sports sped up, cut over into the slow lane and started to pace me. He had his window down and was yelling at us. We continued to laugh at him, which I think further escalated his road rage. As he projected his anger onto us, we approached another vehicle in the right lane. With Mr. Sports still very much being a jerk, we started the game again. This time, however, we only waited for two lane changes before continuing on our journey.

Once there was enough room between my car and the vehicle in the slow lane, Mr. Sports cut over again. However, there wasn't enough room behind the next slow-lane vehicle for him to pull in front of us. That's when he pulled onto the road shoulder and



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sped past two vehicles to get ahead of us.

Now that he was in fast lane, Mr. Sports slowed down to pace another car in the right lane in an effort to retaliate. We stayed behind him, leaving the appropriate two-second following distance and laughing our

dangerous situations — not only for us and Mr. Sports, but also every other motorist on the road. This situation could have easily caused a multicar accident. Also, we were in Texas, which is a gun-friendly state. For all we knew, Mr. Sports could have had a firearm

## Road Rage Statistics

According to [www.safemotorist.com](http://www.safemotorist.com), the following statistics compiled from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Auto Vantage auto club show aggressive driving and road rage cause serious problems on U.S. roadways:

- 66 percent of traffic fatalities are caused by aggressive driving.
- 37 percent of aggressive driving incidents involve a firearm.
- Males under the age of 19 are the most likely to exhibit road rage.
- Half of the drivers who are on the receiving end of

an aggressive behavior — such as horn honking, a rude gesture or tailgating — admit to responding with aggressive behavior themselves.

- Over a seven-year period, 218 murders and 12,610 injuries were attributed to road rage.

- And one very scary statistic worth noting — 2 percent of drivers admit to trying to run an aggressor off the road!

For more information about aggressive driving and road rage, visit [http://www.safemotorist.com/articles/road\\_rage.aspx](http://www.safemotorist.com/articles/road_rage.aspx) or NHTSA at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Aggressive>.

butts off the entire time. Once Mr. Sports decided his efforts were wasted, he sped off. Thankfully, he took the next exit, allowing us to continue our drive home without incident.

Looking back, I realize how foolish it was to antagonize Mr. Sports. We caused a number of

in his vehicle and used it on us to vent his anger.

I am grateful no one was harmed by our actions that day and have since stopped messing with road ragers. There are too many opportunities for something to go horribly wrong. Stay safe out there. ■

**WHICH ONE ARE YOU?**

THE LONE WOLF  
The Thrill Seeker  
The GLOB HOPPER  
The MOTOR vehicle enthusiast

IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS AND DETERMINE IF YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS ARE AT RISK

**BOSS**

**SAFETY FACTOR**

Check out your local Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers meeting to learn how you can see the BOSS Safety Factor



# THE RIT COMES

Are you ready  
to hit the  
road?

- Have your vehicle serviced
- Plan your route
- Pack an emergency road kit
- Check the weather forecast
- Get plenty of rest
- Complete a TRIPS assessment

# READY ...OR NOT?

**Ready ... or Not** is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their "readiness" for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

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So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



<https://safety.army.mil>



## When Everything Goes Right MAJ. JARED SEKELICK

**M**any articles are written about situations that could have resulted in something catastrophic happening because of a momentary lapse in judgment. These are tough lessons to learn. However, I believe very important lessons can also be learned when everything does go according to plan. I am fortunate to be surrounded by extremely knowledgeable and professional aviators who constantly work to improve themselves as well as those around them.

### The mission

Several years ago, I was tasked to fly our division commander and sergeant major to a nearby airport. The flight would take about an hour in good weather. I was a newly minted pilot in command with roughly 600-700 hours of total flight time and about 150 hours as a PC. My co-pilot was a new pilot recently back from flight school with a little more than 200 hours. My crew chief was a highly experienced crewmember with well over a 1,000 hours just in the UH-60.

We received the mission the day before, which gave me ample time and opportunity to plan the route. The largest challenge was going to be the weather. The mission was to take the VIPs to a funeral for a fallen Soldier so they could



meet with the family. This type of mission is obviously a priority to the division commander. As a crew, we understood the importance of getting the leadership with the family. The division commander would not have been able to attend the viewing and meet with the Soldier's family if we did not fly him to the location. The mission was legal and a necessity.

### Preparations

The preliminary forecast we received indicated the aircraft would be under instrument meteorological conditions for the entire route of flight. Also, due to the remnants of a hurricane, there would be a 60-knot head wind in both directions. On top of all that, moderate icing was forecast. The UH-60 is equipped to handle up to moderate icing conditions.

With all this in mind, I began planning my route and quickly

consulted several senior aviators. Each provided numerous considerations and suggestions to improve the safe and efficient execution of the mission. I considered my overall comfort in IMC conditions as well as my co-pilot's comfort level. Having flown quite a bit of time in the clouds, I was very comfortable flying IMC. Considering my co-pilot's experience, I was cognizant I would need to be ready to adjust in the event she became disoriented or overwhelmed.

Since I was given the mission the day prior, I had ample time to test all the necessary systems needed for moderate icing conditions and found all required de-icing and anti-icing systems worked correctly. I was confident the systems would work when I needed them.

The flight route and plan was briefed to include alternate airfields, as required by Army





Regulation 95-1. As a precaution, additional airfields along the route were identified in the event of a failure of one of the anti-icing systems. Main and tail rotor blade icing was my largest concern.

A thorough review of icing conditions with the crew and my briefer, as well as the possible effects

radios and flight. The ceilings were low enough that we were IMC after only a couple hundred feet of climb. My co-pilot executed an excellent VMC takeoff to IMC transition.

We continued on course per the departure and filed flight plan.

We were flying using ground-based navigation aids and backed it

co-pilot was tense but managed the flight workload as needed. To help alleviate the stress, I continually updated her on my actions.

To further assist, I would regularly call out altitude, airspeed, heading and distance to destination. By following on my map, I was able to provide an idea of our position. It should be noted here that later, during our after-action report, she told me my constant talking and informative comments greatly assisted her in alleviating the stress. As a young aviator, she stated she was concerned about being in IMC that long. Because I kept talking in a calm and controlled manner, it gave the appearance I was completely confident in our situation. This, in turn, calmed her as well.

**“With such an important mission, I must admit I did not feel completely relaxed. I was not overly stressed or consumed with fear; it was more that I was hyper-alert and calm.”**

of ice accumulation on the main or tail rotor blades, was discussed. As a crew, we reviewed the most likely cockpit indications in the event of icing. We considered increased aircraft vibrations as an example of the presence of ice we might experience. Everyone knew what to look for and what actions to take. The overall risk was a moderate due to the icing conditions, so I included my briefer and final approval authority on the crew's preparations.

### The departure

The VIPs boarded and our mission began. As briefed, we received our IFR clearance and departed using procedures. My co-pilot was on the controls while I managed the

up with the 128B Global Positioning System. After climbing to our assigned altitude, we discovered the weather predictions were right on the money. We were flying at about 125 knots indicated air speed with about a 65-knot ground speed. About 10 more minutes into the flight, the ice-rate meter began to move and eventually settled in the moderate area. All anti-ice and de-icing equipment was on and all equipment appeared to be fully operational. Everything was going according to plan.

With such an important mission, I must admit I did not feel completely relaxed. I was not overly stressed or consumed with fear; it was more that I was hyper-alert and calm. My

### The arrival

As we approached our destination, air traffic control provided radar vectors for the final approach fix to a precision approach landing system ILS. While making the turn toward the final approach course, my co-pilot became disoriented. Recognizing this, I offered assistance by taking the controls. She later stated that as soon as she released controls, she immediately became oriented again and knew exactly what was going on. The combination of stress as an inexperienced IMC pilot in icing conditions overwhelmed my co-pilot momentarily. But the relief from a highly demanding flight task permitted her to re-cage on the situation. As much



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as we want to think we can do it all as pilots, it is a reality that humans cannot multitask. We are just really good and really fast at switching between tasks.

After landing, we did a post-flight inspection of the aircraft. There was ice on the windshield wiper blade arms, FM antennas and around the cargo windows. The blades, engine inlets, Pitot tubes and windscreens were all clear. After clearing off the ice and conducting a thorough post-flight inspection, we went inside the FBO to update weather and prepare for the return flight.

## The return

The return flight was much the same. Due to the unique weather system, we again encountered a 60-knot headwind with icing conditions. We continued a slightly more direct path back that helped make up a little of the time we were losing due to the headwind conditions. While returning to the airfield, we initiated a non-directional beacon approach; yes, there are still some out there in the FAA world. During the approach, this time I became disoriented on where I was in relation to the intended flight path. I couldn't quite understand why I wasn't getting back on course.

The air traffic controller in the tower had been monitoring my progress on radar and saw I had not yet reached the missed approach point. The controller, recognizing the IMC conditions and that I was obviously not on the correct course, suggested I break off the approach and be radar

## If it happens ...



vectored back around for another attempt. I gratefully accepted the suggestion and began the necessary maneuver and procedures.

The airfield ceiling and visibility were slowly getting worse and worse. After coming back around, my co-pilot executed the approach, this time flawlessly. Upon breaking out, I took the controls and landed. As we taxied off the helipad, the airfield became low IFR with less than a half-mile visibility and a 200 foot

ceiling. Had I attempted to follow the NDB approach to the missed approach point and then executed the go around, I most likely would not have broken out prior to the ceiling coming down. That controller, based on her experience, knowledge and situational awareness, offered assistance. Because of that, we were able to execute the mission safely.

Since that day, I have had ample time to review and reflect on not only the flight, but the entire professional environment of an Army aviator. At every corner of our professional organization are men and women who continually reinforce the foundational aspects of collaboration and cooperation. We are expected to seek out concrete information, work together and support each other with our knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure effective and efficient mission execution.

With time and experience, I became more confident in my abilities. That is shadowed by the confidence I have in my aviation peers. The dedicated men and women of our organization are always working to ensure we execute our missions safely. Army aviators are known for their constant evaluative and critical, outgoing demeanor. The overall goal is to eradicate complacency while continually striving to ensure safe and efficient mission execution. This culture is what led to the successful mission that day. ■



# HERE IT COMES

*Are you ready to crank?*

# READY ...OR NOT?

**Ready ... or Not** is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their "readiness" for what lies ahead—the known as well as the unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we're not. Navigating life's challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?



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## Giving the Finger

STAFF SGT. ROBIN SAYLER  
Montana Army National Guard  
Helena, Montana

**T**he day started out normally as I left for work as an operator of a HEMTT fueler for an aviation unit. When I arrived, I called a friend and wished her a happy anniversary. Little did I know this would also become an anniversary for me. Unfortunately, it's not one I care to celebrate.

As a fueler with an aviation unit, my job was to conduct thorough preventive maintenance checks and services of my HEMTT first thing every morning. I would then test the aviation fuel to ensure water was not present. The HEMTT I was assigned to work on belonged to another state's National Guard and was on loan to my unit. To say this piece of equipment was in bad shape would be an understatement.

Having completed the PMCS, I turned my attention to testing the fuel. Being a shorter Soldier, I was accustomed to using the truck ladder as my personal step stool to reach the fuel valves. During



ladder. As my weight shifted on the ladder, the middle finger on my right hand slipped into the gap. I felt a sharp pain as my finger was crushed. I was quickly taken to the hospital, but the injury to my finger was so severe the surgeon had to amputate to the first joint.

This was a freak accident — a one-in-a-million possibility, right? That's what I thought until I received

injuries, occurring a little more than a year apart, caused by damaged ladders on HEMTT fuel trucks.

The moral of the story is Soldiers must continue to conduct proper PMCS. As they do, they need to ensure the safety pin is in place to secure ladders properly. Also, make sure damaged equipment such as a ladder is replaced quickly. Ladders may go through conditions that impact their integrity, making them unsafe for use. Both of these ladders were probably damaged while the vehicles were in use with the ladders in the down position. It is very important to remember to stow your vehicle ladder in accordance with the operator's manual when they are not in use and any time you are going to move the vehicle. Take it from me — you may be saving yourself or one of your fellow Soldiers from a serious injury. ■

**“I was quickly taken to the hospital, but the injury to my finger was so severe the surgeon had to amputate to the first joint.”**

my 13 years as a fueler, I had done this many times. On this vehicle, however, the ladder was damaged and the hinge points had a gap, even in the open position.

After reaching up and opening the valve, I started to descend the

a call one day from a fellow fueler. He had just left the emergency room with the same injury. Needless to say, I was shocked and curious, so I asked if the ladder was damaged. His answer, believe it or not, was “yes.” That made two





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## Cleared for a Near Miss

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 BENJAMIN HAKENSON

*Author's note: It should have been just another traffic pattern entry under night vision goggles to end the mission, but it ended up being a strong lesson for every member of the crew.*

Our crew for the UH-60 Black Hawk was a good mix with a 1,100-hour NVG pilot in command in the left seat and myself, a 650-hour day/night PC acting as pilot in the right seat. In the back-left seat was a fresh-out-of-progression crew chief, and in the back-right was a senior crew chief with more than 700 hours. The flight was the last leg of a combined day and NVG cross-country training mission. My crew was going into the 12th hour of their duty day and ready to be done. The PC tuned up the weather and contacted the tower to report



field as well. Both of them were CH-47 Chinooks doing hover work on opposite ends of the airfield. Air traffic control personnel told us to enter and report the left-midfield downwind leg for the active runway. As soon as I began the turn to enter the downwind, my PC made

which I did. Both the PC and I had the C-130 in sight and my PC called tower to announce, "Traffic in sight."

We were just past the midfield point, not quite abeam the numbers spread about one mile from the runway, when my senior crew chief on the right calmly made a call about a Chinook at our 3 o'clock, same altitude. I looked to my right and saw it. He was slightly to our rear, maybe a half-mile out and paralleling our course. I responded that I had the traffic in sight, refocused on the C-130 ahead and discounted the Chinook since he looked like he was exiting the area on a known route.

Just a few seconds later my crew chief made another call about the Chinook, but his voice was audibly distressed, which was very uncommon for him. The Chinook had turned, overtaken us and had started a 90-degree turn directly toward us. It seemed like time started crawling as both

**"Just a few seconds later my crew chief made another call about the Chinook, but his voice was audibly distressed, which was very uncommon for him."**

home base was in sight. The flight thus far had been uneventful, but that was all about to change.

I was on the controls and approaching our home airfield from the south. While monitoring the tower frequency, we could tell there were two other aircraft working the

the entry call. Tower responded by saying, "Extend downwind, cleared to land number 2 following a C-130 on an eight-mile final for the ILS." That seemed like a pretty standard call to me. The PC directed me to slow from 100 knots down to 80,





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my crew chief and I began talking more and more frantically. The Chinook just kept coming straight for us with no intention of altering course.

I announced to my PC my intention to climb and began pulling in collective. We all watched through our chin bubbles as that Chinook passed directly underneath us on some type of modified base leg. I did not have to make an evasive maneuver, but if I had not initiated a climb this story would have been on a preliminary loss report instead of a Knowledge magazine article.

My PC made a call to tower asking about the Chinook. Tower responded that it was supposed to cross behind us and he was cleared for landing. That struck the whole crew as odd because we were No. 2 and the C-130 was still four miles out at this point. We continued behind the C-130 and on short final, the tower amended our clearance to land on an abeam taxiway.

We took a few moments on the ground to settle down since both the right-seat crew chief and I were a bit shaken at this near-miss incident. The crew chief and I decided we'd had enough for the night and let the PC know it. The PC elected to continue the flight and this did not sit well with me. I told him again that I was done flying. He stated that the event was over, nothing was wrong and he would take the controls. He completed three more laps in the pattern so we could log our full six hours and reset goggles.

After we landed and shut down, our crew chief was fired up about the event that had just occurred. He was also not happy about the PC choosing to continue the flight after half the crew had requested to head to parking and shut down. News of the event got back to the standardization pilot and wisdom was gained by everyone.

## Lessons learned

If you are in charge, listen to your crew. If any member of your team has had enough and there is not a darn good reason to continue, then don't. If you are not in charge and your message is not getting across, do not back down, as every member of the crew has the same vested interest in a safe flight. ■

## If it happens ...



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# Do You



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## You Bet Your Life

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 JEFFERY DANITZ  
479th Field Artillery Brigade  
Fort Sill, Oklahoma

**W**ould you go to Las Vegas and bet your life on one spin of the roulette wheel? I hope not! You'd probably question the intelligence of anyone willing to make such a gamble. Yet, many of our Soldiers bet their lives every day when they don't use their seat belts or restraints in tactical vehicles, especially in theater. Why is this happening?

I heard all the familiar excuses while working as a safety adviser to the Combined Joint Task Force-7 command staff in Iraq. "The seat belt keeps me from getting out of the vehicle fast." "It restricts me from turning sideways in the seat." And this one that really scared me — "I was told not to use it."

**"An intelligent person learns from their own mistakes, but a wise individual learns from the mistakes of others."**

Aside from a commander telling them not to use seat belts, why would Soldiers make an independent decision not to buckle up in combat? People make decisions based on their perception of the likelihood an event will occur. Roadside bombings and ambushes are common in combat, so it's natural



Soldiers will do everything possible — including not wearing seat belts — to "protect" themselves during these events.

Perception of occurrence is influenced by perception of control, and this factor plays into Soldiers' decision-making

because of their lack of control.

This skewed perception can get Soldiers in trouble. Some Soldiers believe they're more likely to die because they can't get out of a vehicle quickly during an ambush or bombing. In their minds, the risk of injury or death in a rollover or other accident is secondary. It makes sense to them to not wear seat belts in combat. This logic is flawed. Plus, Army regulations say seat belts must be worn at all times — even in combat.

An intelligent person learns from their own mistakes, but a wise individual learns from the mistakes of others. I hope you'll make sound decisions and carry out safe operating procedures every time you begin a mission. Remember, the probability of you making it home safely is much greater if you wear your seat belt. Your family deserves it and the Army will thank you for it. ■

processes, including seat belt usage. When someone thinks they're in control, they believe they're less likely to have an accident. However, we can't control the enemy and can't predict with any certainty when they'll strike. Thus, Soldiers perceive the occurrence of an attack as being highly likely to occur

# ARE YOU READY?

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**Wouldn't you like to prevent the loss of personnel and equipment?**

**Don't you want to protect your combat power?**

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